



UPDATE

POISON CONTROL PROGRAM

1-800-222-1222

www.PoisonHelp.hrsa.gov



About HRSA

The Health Resources and Services Administration is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. HRSA is the primary Federal agency responsible for improving access to health care services for people who are uninsured, isolated, or medically vulnerable. For more information about HRSA and its programs, visit www.hrsa.gov.

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Mark Your Calendar: National Poison Prevention Week is March 20-26, 2011

Congress established **National Poison Prevention Week** in 1961 to reduce unintentional poisonings and promote poison prevention across the country. As **National Poison Prevention Week 2011** approaches, find out what events will occur in your community by calling your local poison center at **1-800-222-1222**. Ask your poison center how you can plan your own poison prevention activity to support their efforts. To help you, look for the new downloadable **National Poison Prevention Week** Planner that will be available in February on the Poison Help Web site at <http://PoisonHelp.hrsa.gov/what-can-you-do/national-poison-prevention-week/index.html>.

Last March, several events implemented by poison centers nationwide increased community awareness about poisons, poison safety, and poison prevention. Through partnerships with public and private organizations, poison centers help communities understand why poisoning is a public health problem and that it can happen to anyone, at any time, and in any place. Target audiences for **National Poison Prevention Week** events typically include young children, parents, caregivers, and health care providers. Events are held at various locations, such as the local zoo, library, schools, and youth centers.

Plan ahead: Next year is the **50th anniversary** of **National Poison Prevention Week**, March 18-24, 2012! What can you do in your community?

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Winter Poison Safety Tips



Keep yourself and your family safe this winter from carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning, winter weather products, and unintentional effects from cold/flu medications by learning about these poison risks and how you can avoid them.

CO, an odorless, colorless gas emitted from all fuel-burning devices (e.g., cars, appliances, furnaces, and gas dryers), causes poisoning deaths each year. Signs of CO poisoning are similar to the flu and other cold-weather viruses, including upset stomach, fatigue, vomiting, dizziness, confusion, and headaches. Those at the greatest risk for CO poisoning are pregnant women, infants, young children, older adults, people with breathing-related problems, and people with heart disease. Following these precautions can help you stay safe:

- Have at least one working CO detector in your home. The best places for CO detectors are near bedrooms and close to furnaces. You can buy CO detectors at home improvement stores and other retail establishments.
- Have heating systems, vents, and chimneys checked annually by professionals. Always follow product instructions while installing or repairing fuel-burning appliances.
- **Never** burn charcoal indoors or use a gas oven as a heat source in an enclosed space such as a house, apartment, or garage.
- **Never** use unvented fuel-burning devices in a home or apartment.
- **Never** run a car in a closed garage.
- If you are exposed to CO, immediately go outdoors to fresh air and call your local poison center at **1-800-222-1222**.

Winter weather and germs also mean increased use of products such as antifreeze, melting salts, thermometers, and cold medications. If you are using antifreeze, keep the product in its original container with a tight cap and away from children. When disposing of an antifreeze container, rinse it with water, replace the safety cap, and place the empty container in the trash. Use salt and ice-melting products with caution and store them out of reach of children and in a locked cabinet.

If you or someone in your family gets sick, use a digital thermometer and remain with children when taking their temperature. Avoid using glass mercury thermometers, which can easily break and produce fumes that are poisonous if inhaled. If mercury is spilled or ingested, call your local poison center at **1-800-222-1222** for advice on proper clean-up procedures and safety measures. Additionally, when treating the common cold and flu, be sure to keep medicines in their original container with a tight cap, and keep them locked up and away from children. Take special precautions with medications that taste, smell, or look like candy or drinks, and never take medicine in the dark. Read and follow all directions and warnings on medicine labels before taking them, and speak to a doctor about all medications (prescribed or over-the-counter) to avoid unintentional overdoses or product mixing.

For more winter poison prevention tips, visit the Poison Help Web site at <http://www.PoisonHelp.hrsa.gov/what-can-you-do/prevention-tips/seasonal-tips/index.html#winter> or call your local poison center at **1-800-222-1222**.

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H1N1 Update: Poison Centers' Role



It's been 1 year since the flu pandemic that threatened to become the worst flu season since 1918. But for U.S. poison centers, last year's H1N1 pandemic offered a real-life test of their public health surveillance skills. One year later, they're taking lessons learned from the flu experience and applying them to other public health concerns.

The State of Florida's Poison Information Centers were first contacted by the State Department of Health in July 2010 about using poison center lines to help field calls regarding the pandemic. The State initially wanted Florida's three poison centers to handle only vaccine-related information calls from health care professionals. To respond to these calls using a Department of Health-approved script, the Florida Poison Information Centers hired temporary employees with experience in medical terminology and tapped the expertise of students in health professions or off-duty specialists in poison information. All three Florida centers designated a coordinator to provide oversight of the H1N1 program.

To streamline H1N1 calls, Florida set up a statewide flu phone line. Calls from the public asking general H1N1 questions were directed to this line, while those arising from health professionals were automatically transferred to the Florida poison centers' auxiliary statewide line and geographically routed to the appropriate center.

After the H1N1 vaccine became available, the poison centers' services evolved. In October, the Florida centers—located in Miami, Jacksonville, and Tampa—were also tasked with fielding calls regarding adverse reactions from H1N1 vaccine administration. These calls, which came from both the public and health care providers, were received through the Poison Help line (**1-800-222-1222**) and answered by the centers' specialists in poison information.

Meanwhile, the Georgia Poison Center expanded its public health role to handle questions about H1N1 and the vaccine from Georgia residents. In collaboration with the staff of the State Public Health's epidemiology and prevention division, the center developed standard answers to the questions anticipated, using data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other reliable sources. The center also checked the CDC Web site frequently to make sure it was offering the most current information.

In both Florida and Georgia, States provided supplementary funding to help pay for the poison centers' expanded role. This demonstrated the value of the services the centers were offering.

According to Dr. Robert Geller, medical director of the Georgia Poison Center, much of the fear over H1N1 had subsided by the time the resource was made available; the center wound up not receiving many calls. But Dr. Jay Schauben, director of the Florida Poison Information Center-Jacksonville, said the Florida poison centers ultimately answered 2,178 calls. Of those, 1,750 were questions about the flu from health care providers, and 428 were about adverse reactions to the vaccines, most commonly fevers and headaches. The expanded use of the Poison Help line helped to strengthen an already-strong relationship between the Florida Poison Information Centers and the State Department of Health.

“We leveraged the expertise of the poison center with the expertise of the Department of Health,” Dr. Schauben said. “It made for very effective management of this crisis.”

When the Deepwater Horizon oil spill occurred, Dr. Schauben wasn’t surprised to be on the phone again with State colleagues, handling a different crisis. “I’m hoping everyone will use this as a model,” he said.

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Updated Web Site Offers New Ways to Promote Poison Prevention Online



Last fall, HRSA updated the Poison Help Web site, <http://www.PoisonHelp.hrsa.gov> (English) and <http://www.PoisonHelpEspanol.hrsa.gov> (Spanish). The site serves as a one-stop resource for poison prevention information. It includes tips, tools, and resources to help you raise awareness of poison prevention, as well as locate the poison center serving your area.

New features include interactive widgets and a Poison Center Spotlight section. The Poison Help widgets are small Internet applications that provide helpful poison prevention information in English and Spanish, including a “Tip of the Week” and a “Did You Know” feature. Eye-catching and interactive, the widgets are designed for you to easily place them on your Web sites, blogs, and social

networking profiles to help raise awareness of poison prevention. Visit the “Widgets” page (<http://PoisonHelp.hrsa.gov/what-can-you-do/badges-and-widgets/index.html>) and follow the instructions on the page.

The Poison Center Spotlight (<http://PoisonHelp.hrsa.gov/poison-centers/poison-center-spotlight/>), a new addition to the Poison Help homepage, highlights the important work of poison centers around the country. Each month will focus on a different poison center. These articles provide readers with a glimpse inside the poison centers, illuminating how they work and provide valuable services to their communities.

The updated Poison Help Web site is a valuable resource with important and useful information for a multitude of audiences, including older adults, children, and parents or other caregivers. Please consider bookmarking the site as HRSA continues to update it with new content throughout the year.

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Poison Help Campaign Update

The Poison Help campaign continues to spread the word about poison safety and awareness nationally and at the local level via radio, television, and outdoor advertising. The campaign is reaching audiences in both English and Spanish around the country.

Hispanic Advertising Pilot Program

In fall 2010, the Poison Help campaign launched a pilot Hispanic advertising campaign in collaboration with the Florida Poison Information Center-Tampa. The campaign is working to increase awareness among Hispanics in Tampa about the availability of the Poison Help line to reach the area's poison center, highlighting that translation services are available for Spanish speakers. The campaign features a series of Spanish-language public service announcements in local newspapers, radio and television stations, and outdoor venues, such as billboards and bus shelters.

The campaign has caught the attention of the local media. As a result, interviews with poison experts have run in local newspapers and on radio and TV stations. HRSA has built on the success of the campaign by collaborating with local organizations interested in poison prevention, including Healthy Start, an association dedicated to maternal and child health; the Healthy Homes Program, which designates "healthy homes" that have passed environmental inspections; the Refugee and Family Program, which assists refugees in becoming self-sufficient; and Hillsborough County Public Schools. These community organizations are helping to raise awareness about poison prevention on a grass-roots level through events and participation in local activities. In the months ahead, the campaign will continue to build new relationships to alert the Spanish-speaking community to available resources through the Poison Help line, which connects callers to their local poison center 24 hours a day.



**Lisette Ojeda Cullen, Educator
and Carlos Peralta, radio station host,
La Maxima 92.5 FM**

Radio Campaign

In August, the Poison Help campaign redistributed its 30- and 60-second Poison Help radio jingles (<http://www.PoisonHelp.hrsa.gov/resources/jingle/index.html>), reaching an estimated 5,700 radio stations across the Nation. The English and Spanish-language jingles raise awareness of the Poison Help line, **1-800-222-1222**, which connects callers to their local poison center. Millions of people have likely heard about the Poison Help number as a result of this radio campaign, which has received airtime on hundreds of radio stations in almost every state. To date, the jingles have aired in 8 of the top 10 media markets: New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Dallas, Boston, Atlanta, Washington, and Houston.

CAMPAIGN BY THE NUMBERS

The radio campaign has reached new heights since HRSA reported on its progress in the fall 2010 *Poison Control Program Update* newsletter:

- Radio stations playing the jingles: 249
- Spanish stations playing the jingles: 24
- Number of plays: 33,6250
- Hours of air time: 471
- Listener exposures: 154 million

Poison Centers' Role Highlighted in U.S. Senate Testimony

Last October, Dr. Steve Marcus, executive and medical director of the New Jersey Poison Information and Education System, led a panel discussion before the U.S. Senate's Subcommittee on Superfund, Toxics, and Environmental Health. The hearing addressed the importance of poison centers as well as the dangers of exposure to toxic chemicals from consumer products and the environment. At the hearing, participants noted that more than 5 percent of childhood cancers, 10 percent of behavioral disorders, and 30 percent of childhood asthma cases are associated with exposure to hazardous chemicals.

According to Dr. Marcus, "Poison centers and their medical toxicologists are involved on a daily basis responding to questions about exposures to a variety of toxic substances." His testimony shed light on the importance of regional poison centers in responding to the needs of people nationwide, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Poison centers answer questions about exposures to medications, household products, industrial chemicals, and environmental contaminants (including substances in trace quantities)—any of which can have immediate, even life-threatening effects and long-term implications for children.

Dr. Marcus also highlighted the financial savings that poison centers offer and called for increased funding for poison centers. He stated that every \$1 invested in poison center services creates an estimated \$7 in savings in health care costs. The fact that someone only needs to remember one number, **1-800-222-1222**, to reach their local poison center anywhere in the country underscores the ease with which the public can readily use this resource. Dr. Marcus invited participants at the hearing to tour New Jersey's poison center to see for themselves what an operating poison center can do.

Dr. Sanjay Gupta, chief medical correspondent for CNN and a highly regarded health advocate, also provided testimony. He cited striking statistics stating that of the 80,000 chemicals sold, restrictions are only placed on 5. Additionally, he noted that children's curiosity, in combination with their proximity to the ground and lack of strong immune systems, can increase the risk of exposures to mercury, lead, flame retardants, and pesticides. Dr. Gupta stated that exposure to many chemicals accumulates over time and can continue to harm children as they age. He also noted that the long-term risks of chemicals should be taken into account.

A complete webcast of the hearing is available at http://epw.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=Hearings.Hearing&Hearing_id=c9fbef98-ee5d-2a2d-65cd-21bcd5313f8f.

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2010 mHealth Summit Video Now Available

The 2010 mHealth Summit convened leaders in research, technology, and policy to share their expertise and draft a blueprint for the future of delivering health care services via mobile communication devices. The November 8-10, 2010, summit in Washington, D.C., was presented by the Foundation for the National Institutes of Health in partnership with the National Institutes of Health and the United Nations Foundation. Watch exclusive video from the event at <http://www.fnih.org/events/2010-mhealth-summit>.

According to the UN Foundation, applications of mobile health, also known as mHealth, range from targeted text messages to promote healthy behavior to wide-scale alerts about disease outbreaks. The proliferation of cell phones across the globe, even in locales without basic health infrastructure, is spurring the growth of mHealth in developing countries.

HRSA is a strong promotion partner and is the lead agency for the evaluation of text4baby, a free mobile information service to promote maternal and child health. Text4baby provides pregnant women and new moms with three free, evidence-based text messages a week so they can take care of their health and their baby's health. The program, launched on February 4, 2010, is made possible through a broad public-private partnership. For more information about text4baby, please see <http://www.text4baby.org>.

Visit the official mHealth site (<http://mhealthsummit.org/>) for more information about the summit.

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Save the Date: National Healthy Homes Conference

National Healthy Homes Conference

Denver, CO

June 20-23, 2011

Several Federal agencies are working together through the National Healthy Homes Conference to help create and sustain healthy homes and communities for everyone. The Federally sponsored event will bring together a wide range of sectors to help make housing healthy, safe, and environmentally sustainable. The conference is hosted by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Office of Healthy Homes and Lead Hazard Control, in partnership with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Department of Energy, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The event builds on and expands the landmark 2008 Healthy Homes Conference in Baltimore, MD. This year's conference theme is "Leading the Nation to Healthy Homes, Families, and Communities." It will chart the future of using housing as a platform to improve health—a future in which homes are designed, constructed, rehabilitated, and maintained in a manner that supports the health and safety of their occupants. Learn more at the conference's Web site, <http://www.healthyhomesconference.org>.

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This publication lists non-federal resources in order to provide additional information to consumers. The views and content in these resources have not been formally approved by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) or the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). Listing these resources is not an endorsement by HHS or HRSA.

This is the final issue of the *Poison Control Program Update* newsletter. Visit <http://www.PoisonHelp.hrsa.gov> for ongoing updates regarding poison information and resources.